

2. Existing Conditions Assessment

Walking conditions are the product of many factors. Pedestrian infrastructure, or the physical sidewalks, pathways, and crosswalks in a city, are perhaps the first factor that comes to mind. The presence of a sidewalk or the protection afforded by signals and crosswalks form key components of whether and where we choose to walk. Just as important for determining pedestrian mobility, however, are the destinations that we can choose to walk to. Assessing land use—or the make-up of uses in a city, such as residential neighborhoods, retail and commercial areas, and parks—helps us understand how “walkable” a city is, or how close a residential neighborhood is to jobs, services, schools, and parks.



Crosswalk at Montclair Elementary School

Because transit increases the number of walkable destinations, walkability also depends on how frequent and connective transit service is. Assessing walking conditions in Los Altos necessarily means assessing the service provided as well as the accessibility and accommodations at station areas and bus stops where passengers board transit.



Pedestrian walkway alongside shops at Loyola Corners

Another important way to think about walking conditions in Los Altos is to consider who is walking. Senior citizens, children, and people in households with no cars are more likely to walk for errands, school, and other personal trips. Knowing how many of Los Altos residents fit these categories and where they live helps assess and guide infrastructure improvements.

Still another important facet is how safe people in Los Altos feel while walking. An assessment of the education, encouragement, and enforcement programs in place in Los Altos offers another level of understanding of what the conditions are for walking in Los Altos.

The following sections assess walking in Los Altos as a product of all of these factors.

- The first two sections (2.1 Local Demographics and 2.2 Land Use and Destinations) outline the general demographics of Los Altos residents and current land use make-up of the city, assessing how these two factors affect the number of walking trips and walking accessibility.
- The next section (2.3 Infrastructure) looks at the physical pedestrian infrastructure of Los Altos, assessing the current condition and connectivity of existing sidewalks, pathways, crosswalks, and trails in the city.

- A fourth section (2.4 ADA Accessibility) assesses special accessibility aspects of walking conditions in Los Altos, evaluating what walking conditions are for Los Altos residents that are mobility-impaired.
- A final section (2.5 Existing Education, Encouragement, and Enforcement Programs) identifies the programs already in place that educate Los Altans about pedestrian safety, encourage walking trips, and enforce unsafe driver behavior.

Together, these elements help us understand pedestrian conditions in Los Altos. Following these sections is a summary (2.6 Summary of Opportunities and Constraints) of identified opportunities for improvement and of constraints to improving walking conditions in Los Altos.

2.1. Local Demographics

Demographics are one way to understand walking conditions in Los Altos. While there are few households with no vehicles (an estimated 100 workers in Los Altos do not have access to a car), there are many households with members who cannot or may have difficulty driving. Of the 28,976 residents of Los Altos, 20 percent are over the age of 65. Over 10 percent of the city population is older than 75 years old. Another 22 percent are under the age of 15.

Comparing Los Altos to the national population, the City has slightly more younger and older residents than most other cities—nationally, just under 20 percent of people in the US are younger than 15, and 15 percent are older than 65.¹ Likewise, comparing Los Altos to California, the City has a greater share of older residents than the state. A significantly smaller share of Los Altos residents are between the ages of 15 and 55 compared to the state as a whole. As shown in Figure 2-1, the City also has a greater share of residents between the ages of 5 to 9 years of age than the statewide average.

¹ U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey 3-Year Estimate, 2009-2011.

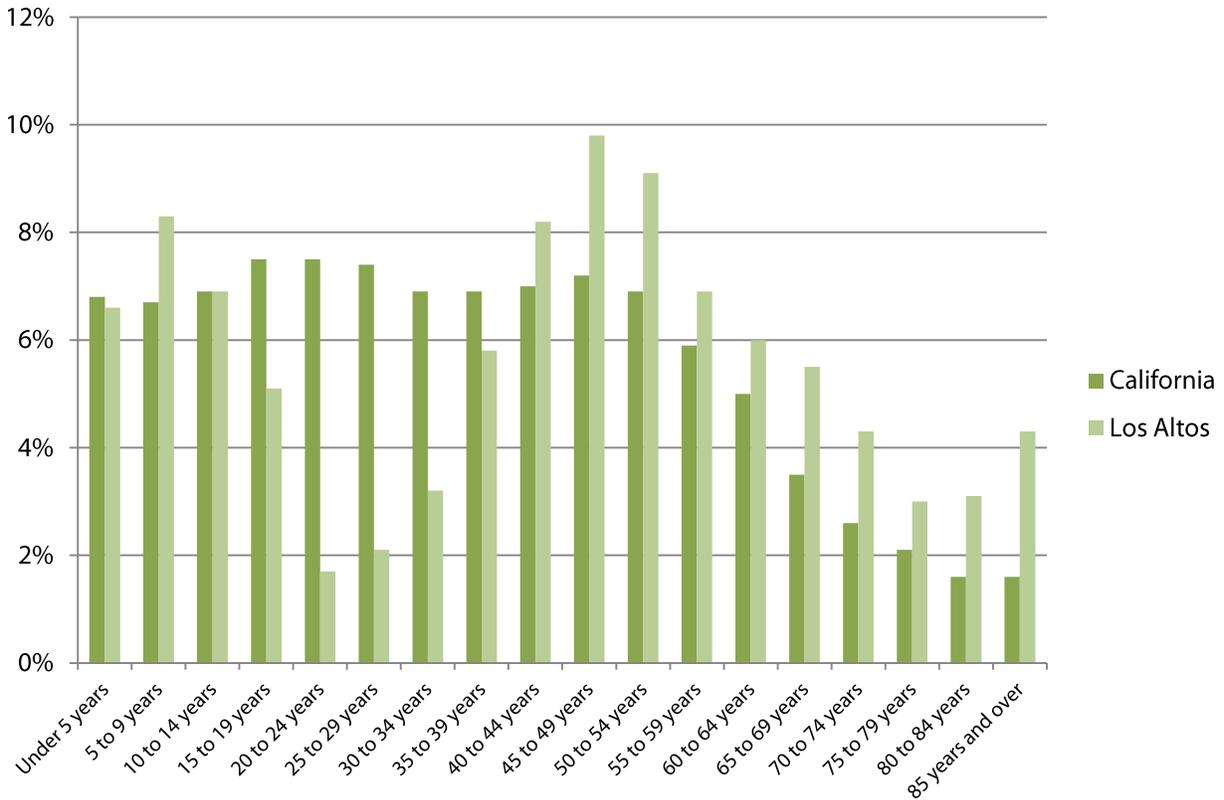


Figure 2-1: Age of Residents in California and Los Altos

Another way to think about the demographics of Los Altos residents is to consider how many households are likely caregivers for vulnerable populations, such as young children or senior citizens. According to the American Community Survey, approximately 36 percent of Los Altans live in households with children under 18 years old. An equal percentage of Los Altos residents live in households with one or more people aged 65 and older. Additionally, according to the American Community Survey, 7.1 percent of Los Altans have a disability. Of Los Altos residents aged 65 and older, an estimated 23 percent are living with a disability. Understanding and addressing the special needs of those with reduced mobility and younger and older residents is an integral part of creating safe walking conditions for all residents.

2.2. Land Use and Destinations

The key factors determining whether land use has a positive impact on walkability include whether jobs are located within walking distance of residential neighborhoods, whether goods and services are located within walking distances, and whether transit bridges the gaps when walking distances are too great. The following subsections examine work trips, shopping and school trips, and transit accessibility in Los Altos and their impact on walking trips.

Commuting

Bordering Palo Alto, Mountain View, Sunnyvale, and Cupertino, Los Altos is well-positioned near many of Silicon Valley's key employment centers. With no major employment centers of its own, Los Altos can be considered a bedroom community, where most working residents leave during the weekday for work and return at night and on the weekends. Most Los Altos' journey-to-work trips are not walking trips because most regional employment centers are not within walking distance of Los Altos residents.

According to the American Community Survey, 1.4 percent of the 12,559 workers living in Los Altos walk to work (Table 2-1), indicating that approximately 174 residents walk to work. Among nearby cities on the Peninsula, Los Altos has a slightly lower share of residents who walk to work than Sunnyvale (1.5 percent) but slightly higher share than Cupertino (1.2 percent). Palo Alto has a significantly higher share than Los Altos (5.3 percent), while the difference between Mountain View and Los Altos is less marked (1 percent more residents of Mountain View walk to work than residents of Los Altos).

The American Community Survey also identifies the number of workers whose place of work is within Los Altos. Of those workers, who may not necessarily live in Los Altos, an estimated 1 percent walk to work.

The U.S. Census collects information about the primary mode that residents use when commuting to work. While this provides important data about commute trips, these data only tell us about those residents who are employed and how they typically travel to work. This data does not capture the many walking other trips that Los Altos residents take, including school, shopping, and recreational trips. Additionally, it does not capture the walking trips that someone in Los Altos might take after parking a vehicle or in order to use public transit, nor does it capture non-Los Altos residents who walk in the city

Table 2-1: Regional Comparisons of Commute Modes

Location	Population	Estimated Residents Who Work	Estimated Residents Who Walk to Work	Estimated Percent of Residents Who Walk to Work
Los Altos	28,976	12,559	174	1.4%
Cupertino	58,302	24,409	301	1.2%
Mountain View	74,066	40,385	1,156	2.9%
Palo Alto	64,403	29,781	1,696	5.7%
Sunnyvale	140,081	69,478	1,035	1.5%

Source: American Community Survey 3-Year Estimate, 2009-2011

Another useful comparison may be between city, state, and national figures. As shown in Table 2-2, Los Altos has a lower percentage of residents who walk to work than the county, state, and national shares.

Table 2-2: Local, State, and National Comparisons of Commute Modes

Location	Bike	Walk	Drive	Transit
Los Altos	0.9%	1.4%	83.9%	2.6%
Santa Clara	1.6%	2.1%	87.0%	3.2%

Location	Bike	Walk	Drive	Transit
County				
California	1.0%	2.8%	84.5%	5.2%
United States	0.5%	2.8%	86.2%	5.0%

Source: American Community Survey 3-Year Estimate, 2009-2011

The dataset used to compile these statistics is the American Community Survey 3-Year Estimate (2009-2011), which is useful for recent, relatively accurate data about smaller regions, such as cities and towns. However, the data often comes with significant margins of error.

Key Destinations

The main of types of destinations that people in Los Altos walk to include commercial zones, civic areas, senior centers, medical centers, schools, and parks. Neighborhood commercial centers support the surrounding residential areas with community-serving uses such as grocery stores and post offices, as well as other services, retail and restaurants. Civic buildings, such as libraries and city offices, are frequent weekly destinations for many residents, as are senior centers. According to a 2011 survey of nearly 1000 senior citizens in Los Altos and Los Altos Hills, 24 percent reported frequently attending Hillview Senior Center in Los Altos.²



The State Street Green was a temporary park in Downtown Los Altos created during nearby street reconstruction.

While nearby Stanford Medical Center offers health specialists, Los Altos residents also visit general practitioners, dentists, eye doctors, and other medical professionals whose offices are often located within neighborhood commercial zones.

Schools in Los Altos are neighborhood-based, with elementary schools serving smaller districts than the region-wide junior high and high school districts. Additionally, neighborhood parks are found within walking distance of nearly every resident of Los Altos.

Neighborhood Nodes

The City of Los Altos can be divided into three major neighborhoods: North, Central, and South. Within these three neighborhoods, key destinations are distributed fairly evenly, with two to three neighborhood commercial nodes and several schools and parks in each region (Figure 2-2: North Los Altos Land Use, Figure 2-3, Figure 2-4). Evaluating the walking connections between residential areas and key destinations in each neighborhood will help us understand even more how land use impacts walkability in Los Altos.

² Senior Committees of Los Altos and Los Altos Hills Senior Needs Survey, 2011

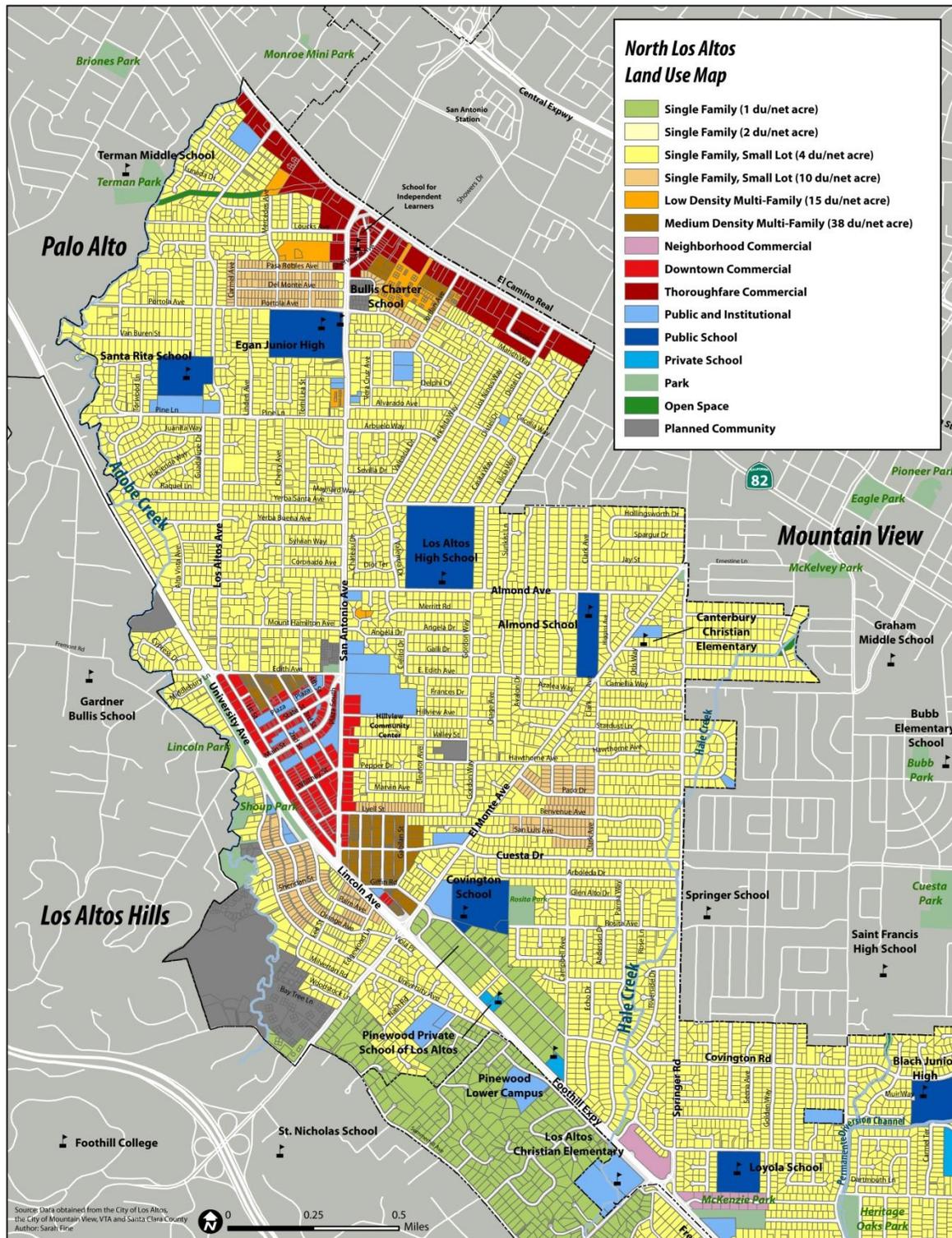


Figure 2-2: North Los Altos Land Use

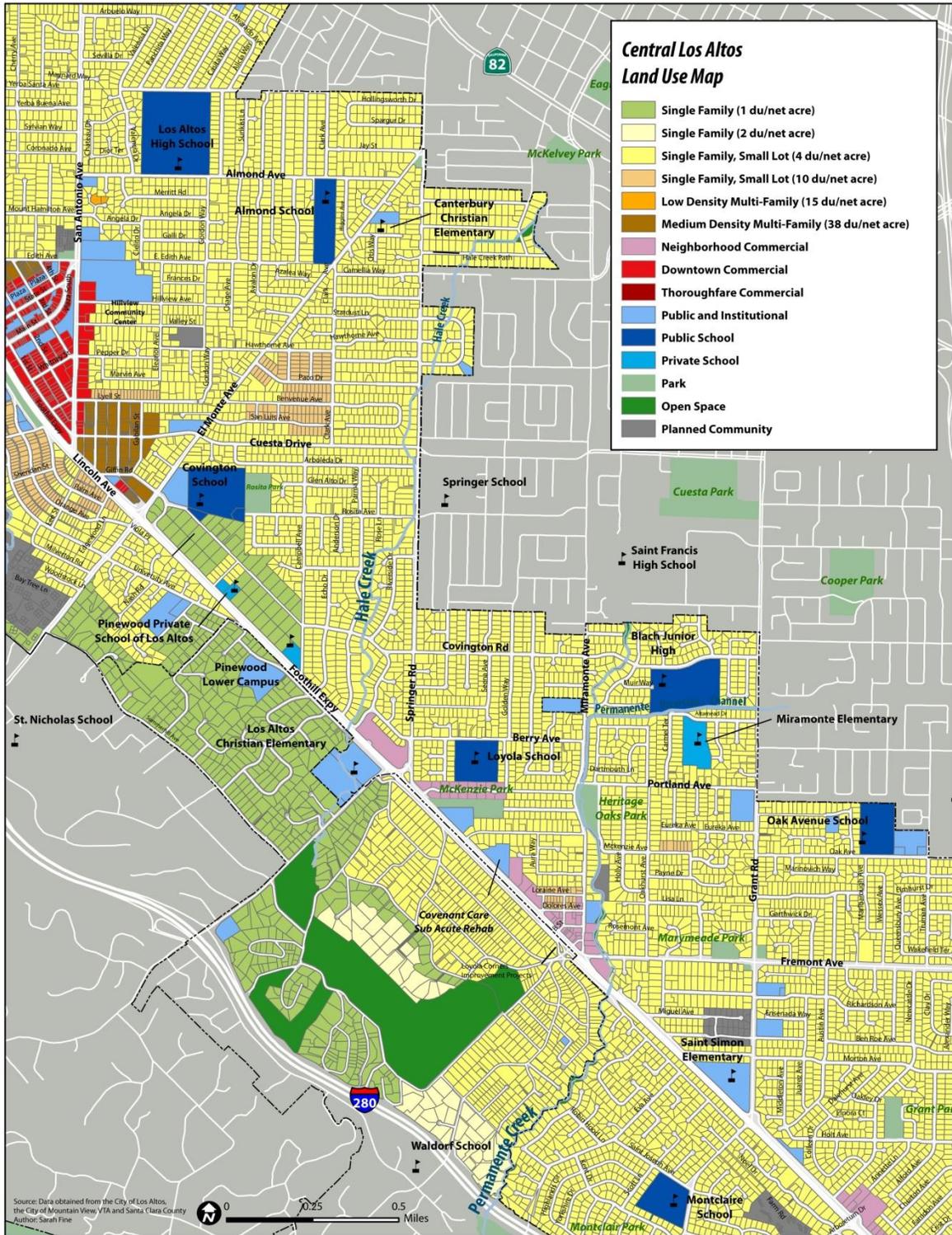


Figure 2-3: Central Los Altos Land Use

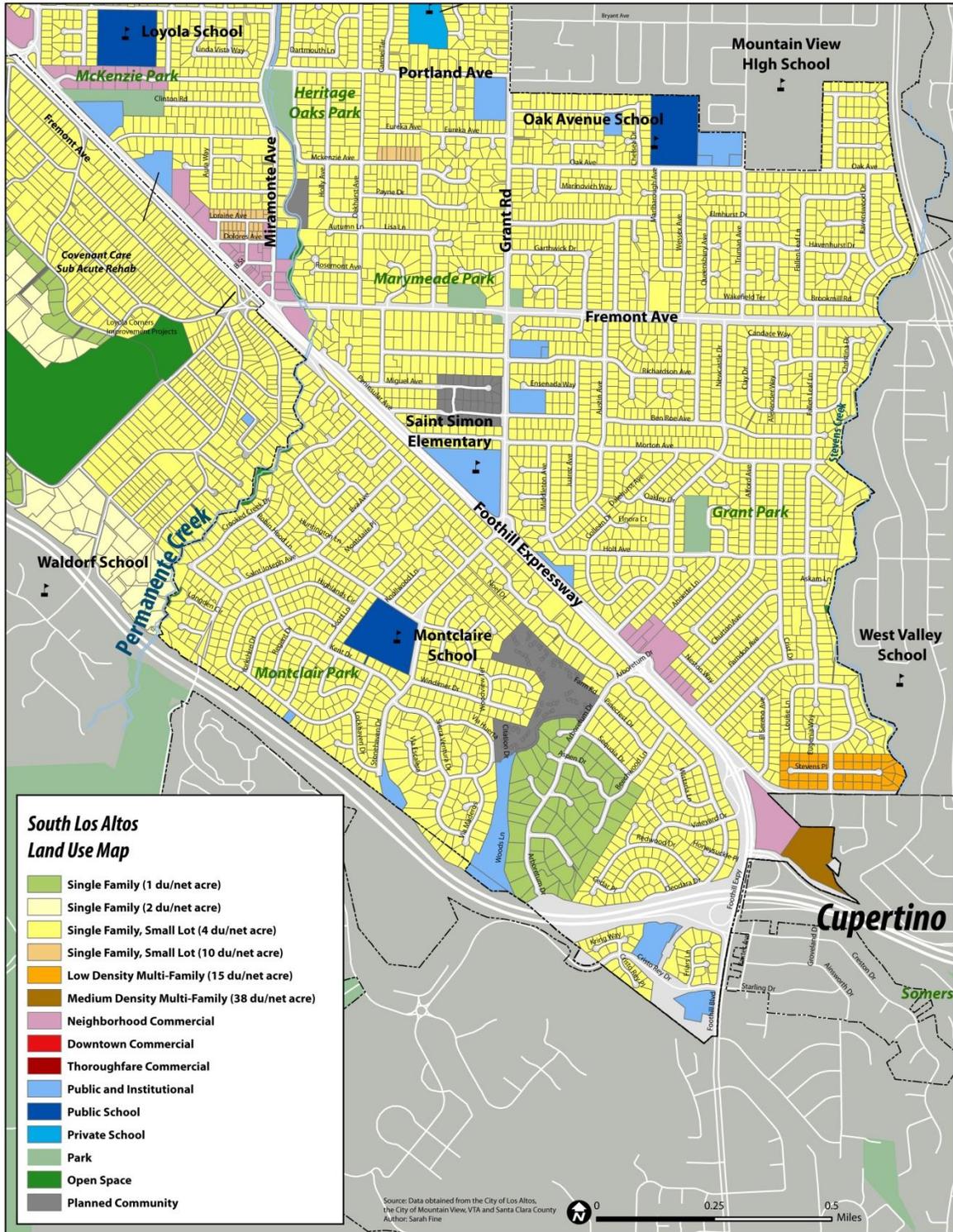


Figure 2-4: South Los Altos Land Use

Transit

Access to frequent transit provides pedestrians with a greater set of destinations. Transit access in Los Altos is provided by Valley Transportation Authority (VTA) and Caltrain.

VTA provides local and regional connections through bus service. Table 2-3: VTA Routes lists the VTA routes that serve Los Altos residents. Figure 2-5 shows the number of passengers boarding VTA buses during a typical week in Los Altos.

Table 2-3: VTA Routes

Weekday Peak Frequency	Route Number	Destinations
Every 12 Minutes	22	Points along El Camino Real. Access to Palo Alto Transit Center, Mountain View, Santa Clara Transit Center, Alum Rock Transit Center, and Eastridge Transit Center.
Every 20 Minutes	522	Same as 22, fewer observed stops.
Every 30 Minutes	40	Points along San Antonio Avenue in Los Altos. Access to the San Antonio Transit Center, San Antonio Caltrain Station. Rengstorff Road and points east in Mountain View. West to Foothill College.
	52	Points along El Monte Avenue in Los Altos. West to Foothill College. East to the Mountain View Transit Center, where passengers can make connections to Caltrain and VTA Light Rail.
Every 60 Minutes	51	Stops along Fremont Avenue at Grant Road and Truman Avenue in southeastern Los Altos. Access to Mountain View Transit Center and El Camino Hospital to north. Access to downtown Cupertino.



Transit access in Los Altos is provided by the Valley Transportation Authority.

Regional rail transit is provided by Caltrain and VTA Light Rail. Caltrain stations at San Antonio and Mountain View are both within a half mile of the northern Los Altos city boundary. At San Antonio Caltrain, Los Altans can board local and limited stop trains. At Mountain View Caltrain, rail service includes local, limited-stop and baby bullet trains, providing slightly faster connections to points further north and south along the peninsula and to San Francisco.

VTA Light Rail can be accessed at the Mountain View Station as well. There, passengers board the Mountain View-Winchester line, which extends south from the Mountain View station with local stops in Santa Clara and San Jose. Transfers to the Alum-Rock Santa Theresa line are made at Tasman Station on the Mountain View-Winchester line.

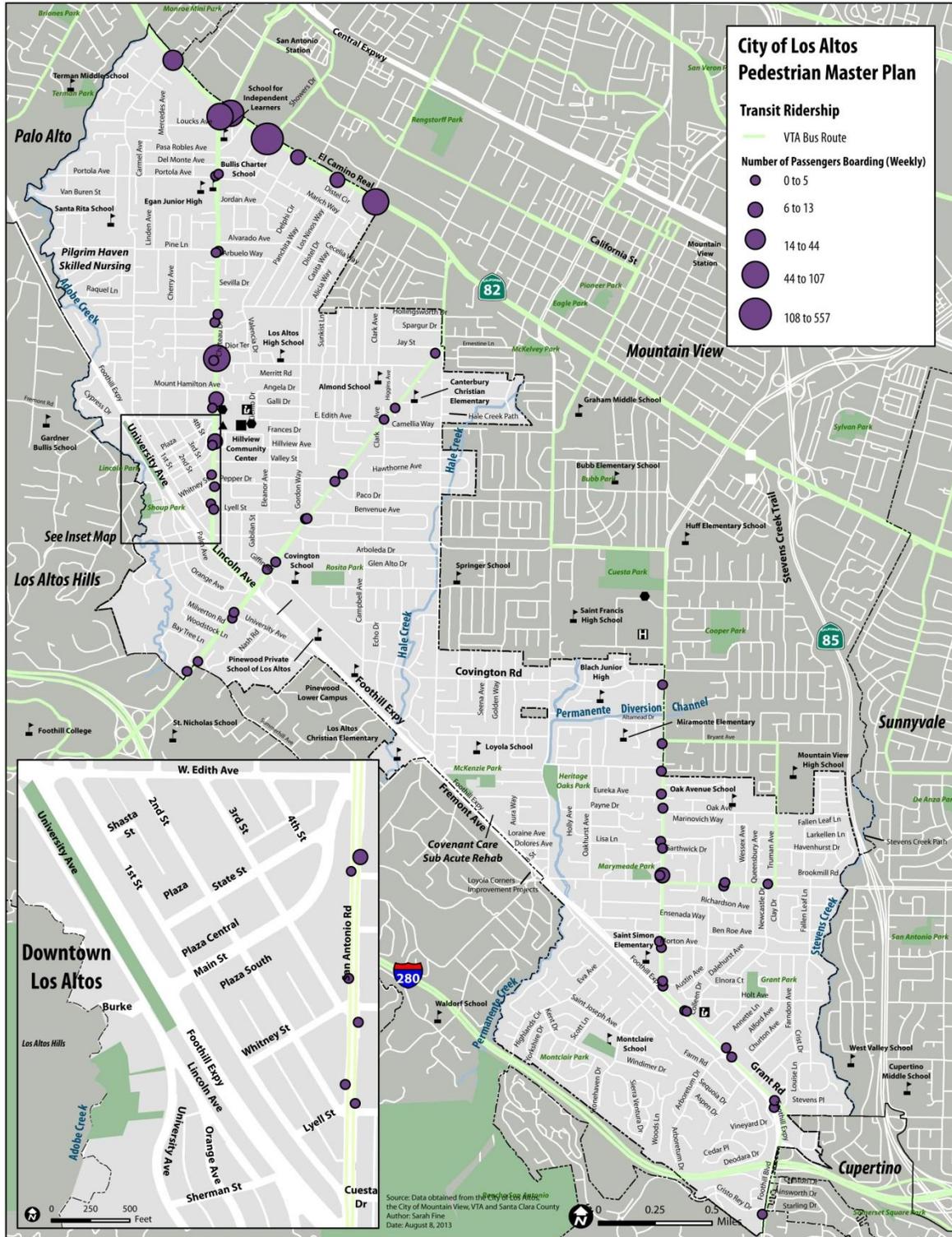


Figure 2-5: Typical Weekly Transit Ridership

2.3. Infrastructure

Pedestrian Inventory

To assess conditions for pedestrians in Los Altos, the City identified a subset of Los Altos streets as priority corridors to evaluate existing conditions and recommend improvements for walking.

These street segments were chosen based on existing pedestrian activity, whether a route was identified as a walking route in previous Suggested Routes to School maps, the presence of existing sidewalks or pedestrian connectors, and proximity to commercial areas. As such, most of the streets evaluated are collector or arterial streets, with relatively high traffic volume and speed. Many residential streets were also selected to ensure the evaluation included a balance of street types and surrounding land uses.

The segments chosen for the inventory are also distributed throughout each geographic region of Los Altos. Figure 2-6 provides a map of the segments inventoried.

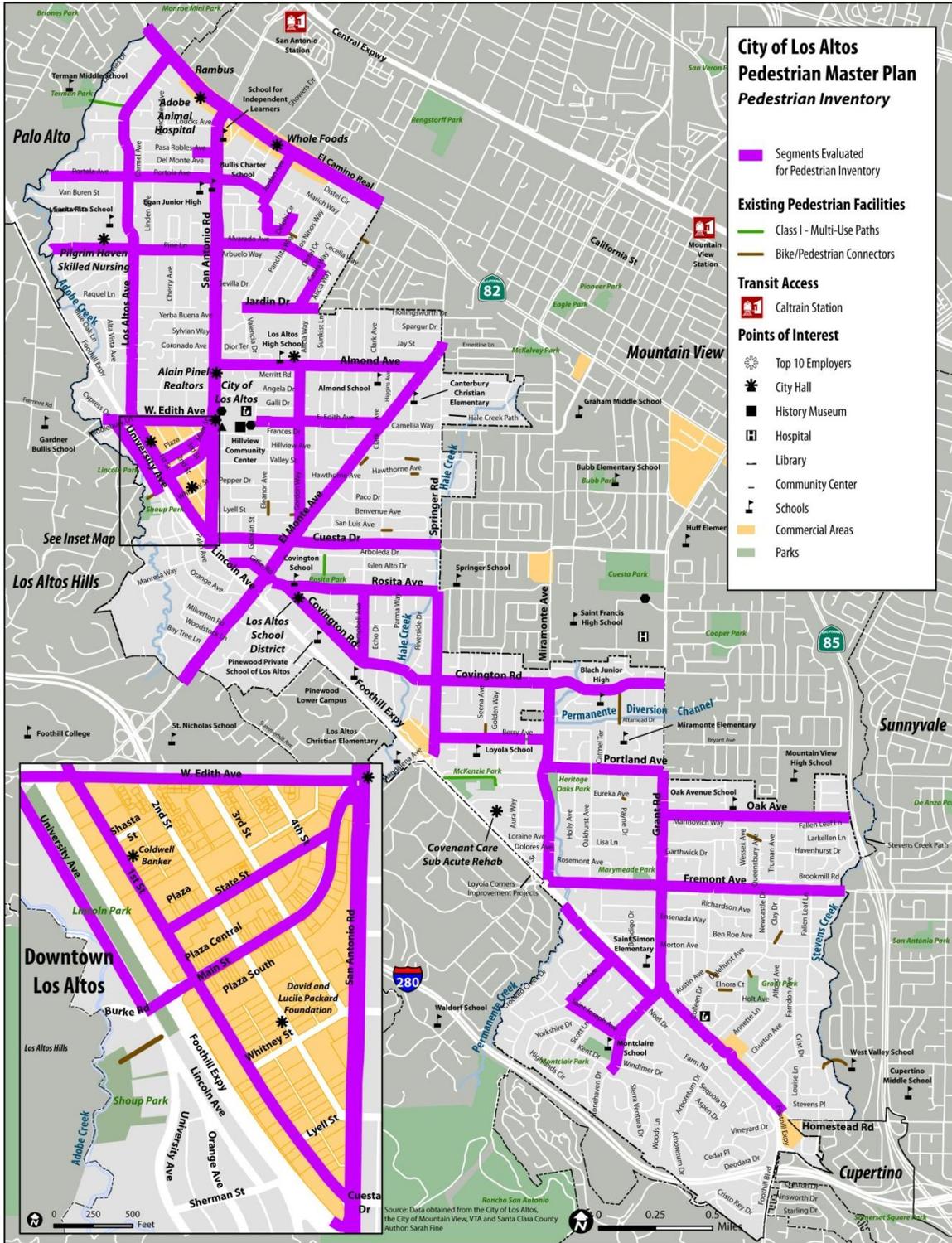


Figure 2-6: Pedestrian Inventory

Facility Types

Pedestrian facilities provided in Los Altos vary significantly, and provide a range of protection and comfort from motor vehicle and bicycle traffic. Facility types include:

- Unimproved shoulder—dirt or paved
- Striped shoulder – shared with parking or bicyclists
- Sidewalk with rolled curb and no planting strip – typically concrete
- Sidewalk with vertical curb and no planting strip – concrete or asphalt
- Sidewalk with curb and planting strip or bioswale buffer
- Multi-use pathway with planted buffer
- Dirt pathway with or without planted buffer

Examples are described below.



Concrete sidewalk with tree pits in Loyola Corners (left), concrete sidewalk with vertical curb on Fremont Road (center), and gravel/dirt sidewalk on Carob Lane (right).

Sidewalks

Sidewalks come in many forms in Los Altos. Some are made of asphalt, others of concrete, and some are soft paths of dirt or a mix of dirt and gravel (see photos above). Curb treatments vary as well—rolled curbs and vertical curbs are both common (see photos below). Sidewalks are provided mostly on major roads, near schools, and in Downtown Los Altos, although sidewalks can be found in some residential areas as well. Sidewalk designs vary across the city, and even along many corridors. There are also often gaps in the sidewalk along the same corridor.

A map of existing pedestrian conditions, including the current locations of sidewalks in Los Altos, is presented in Figure 2-7: Existing Conditions.



Asphalt berm separating pedestrian walkway (left) and rolled curb with no sidewalk (right).



Figure 2-7: Existing Conditions

Paved Shoulders

Where there are no sidewalks in Los Altos, there are often paved shoulders that allow pedestrians to walk along neighborhood streets without being in the vehicle travel lane. However, these paved shoulders are subject to obstruction, whether through degradation of the pavement, overgrown vegetation, or by being used as additional residential parking. Obstructions to the paved shoulders in residential streets can force neighborhood walkers into the street, an especial safety concern for those walking in the early morning and early evening hours.

Multi-Use Paths

Multi-use paths are not common in Los Altos, but do serve an important purpose in providing safe access to elementary and middle schools. One multi-use path runs the length of Berry Avenue, providing access to Loyola School. Another, a few blocks away, runs along Rosita Avenue between Campbell Avenue and Covington School. The third provides access to Terman Middle School from Los Altos Avenue, a route taken by both Los Altos and Palo Alto students.



Paved shoulders often double as parking lanes, sidewalks, and bicycle facilities in many residential neighborhoods in Los Altos.



There are three major neighborhood multi-use pathways in the City, both located in Central Los Altos. The path on Berry Avenue is depicted above.



A twelve-foot multi-use path on Rosita Avenue.

Pedestrian Connectors

Pedestrian connectors are a unique feature of Los Altos's pedestrian facility network. These paths are typically the length of one or two residential properties and the width of two pedestrians or a careful bicyclist. Pedestrian connectors provide an often scenic shortcut through neighborhood streets and create network accessibility for pedestrians where the street network is incomplete or obstructed.



This pedestrian connector provides access from Edith Avenue to El Monte Avenue, adjacent to Almond Elementary School



The path above provides access from the west end of Edith Avenue to Hillview Baseball Field and Community Center

Crosswalks and crossings

Most major roadways in Los Altos have paved sidewalks, which is valuable for pedestrians traveling in the direction of traffic. However, crossing these roadways can be a serious source of travel delay, as pedestrians often must wait considerable amounts of time for traffic signals timed to optimize vehicle flow. Difficult intersections may prompt pedestrians to attempt two-phased crossings where there are no pedestrian refuges.

Major roadways in Los Altos with challenging and/or infrequent pedestrian crossings include:

- El Camino Real
- San Antonio Road
- Foothill Expressway
- Fremont Avenue

Crossing Guard Locations

Crossing guards are located near school entrances at 14 locations in Los Altos, assisting students who walk or bike to school. Crossing guards are typically located on major roadways where morning volume and speed are great or where pedestrian or bicycle crossing may be otherwise difficult.

Crossing guard shifts are timed to coincide with the various bell schedules of the school the guard is serving. Shifts typically begin 30 to 45 minutes before and end 15 minutes after the morning bell. In the afternoon, crossing guards are present 15 minutes before the first afternoon bell and 30 to 45 minutes after the last.



A crossing on Grant Road at Morton Avenue includes curb ramps, a raised crosswalk, yellow ladder striping, and pedestrian-activated in-pavement flashing lights. St. Simon Elementary School is located on the west side of the crosswalk. A bus stop for VTA Route 51 is located on the east.



While crosswalks are best when they connect to a larger sidewalk network, sometimes a minimal treatment still works. Above, across from Blach Elementary, a bulbout provides visibility for crossing pedestrians.

2.4. ADA Accessibility

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) was signed into law in 1990 to protect the rights of people with disabilities. As defined by the ADA, a person with a disability is a person who has a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities, has a record of such an impairment, or is regarded as having such an impairment. This includes people with mobility impairments, vision impairments, hearing impairments, and mental impairments.

Among the rights that ADA protects is the right to access public services and the right to access places of public accommodation, including, restaurants, shopping centers, doctors' offices, libraries, stores, hotels, and other commercial buildings.

Compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act does not just benefit those with mobility impairments. Continuous and connected sidewalks, countdown signals, and curb ramps provide safety and mobility for all sidewalk users.

ADA design guidelines

The ADA specifies design guidelines that must be met by public agencies when designing and reconstructing public rights-of-way. When evaluating whether a walkway is ADA compliant, cities consult guidelines such as the Americans with Disabilities Act Accessibility Guidelines (ADAAG) and the Public Rights-of-Way Accessibility Guidelines (PROWAG).

These guidelines offer specific guidance for constructing accessible sidewalks, including, but not limited to the following items,:

- **Pedestrian clear width:** an area of the sidewalk corridor reserved for pedestrian travel
- **Cross-slope:** the slope that is perpendicular to the direction of travel
- **Running slope:** the slope that is parallel to the direction of travel
- **Obstructions:** any landscaping, utility pole, or other protruding or vertical object that obstructs the pedestrian through zone



All pedestrians benefit from accessible sidewalks.



The curb ramp above is located at Grant Road.



An out of date curb ramp on Miramonte Avenue at Fremont Avenue.

- **Gaps, grates and other openings:** any gap in the pedestrian through zone wider than ½ inch may catch wheelchair castings, canes, crutches, inline skate wheels, and bicycle wheels
- **Accessible signals:** traffic signals that alert pedestrians through multiple media (sound, vision, tactile)

Curb ramps

A curb ramp is a short ramp cut through a curb, providing an accessible path from a roadway to a walkway. Curb ramps provide safe and convenient passage onto street crossings for a variety of sidewalk users, including but not limited to those in wheelchairs, pushing strollers, and pulling rolling backpacks or other wheeled devices. Curb ramps are an important facet of ADA compliance because they make pedestrian crossings accessible to people with disabilities. The provision of curb ramps complies with Title II of the ADA.

Curb ramps are present in Los Altos in select locations and vary in condition. Curb ramps are not as useful if they do not connect to a larger pedestrian network.

Countdown signals

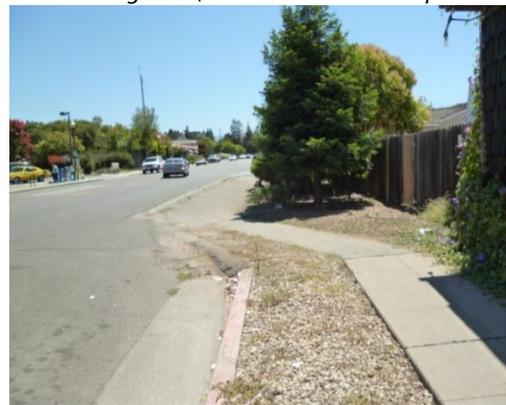
Countdown signals tell pedestrians how much time they have left to cross the street before the light changes. Countdown signals are especially important for road users who travel slower in crosswalk than others, such as young children, guardians with young children, and senior citizens. All traffic signals in Los Altos have pedestrian countdowns and audible signals.



All traffic signals in Los Altos have pedestrian countdowns and audible signals. (A Street at Foothill Expressway)

Sidewalk continuity

Sidewalk continuity is perhaps one of the biggest challenges to pedestrian accessibility in Los Altos. Inconsistent sidewalks are very common in Los Altos. There are sidewalks on nearly all two miles of Los Altos Avenue, but there is also a four-block gap from Yerba Santa Avenue to Mariposa Avenue where there are no sidewalks. Similarly, Oak Avenue, which fronts Oak Avenue School, and E. Edith Avenue, which connects the City of Los Altos complex and El Monte Avenue, both provide important connections to school or civic uses but have several major gaps in the sidewalk.



Sidewalks are inconsistent throughout much of Los Altos. Above, a paved sidewalk drops off into a paved shoulder on Miramonte Avenue at Loraine Avenue in the Loyola Corners neighborhood.

Sidewalk quality

Sidewalk quality also varies considerably across the city and often within the same corridor. Some stretches of sidewalk are level in surface, made of consistent material, and overall acceptable and ADA compliant. However, these stretches are often not continuous,



The sidewalk ends abruptly at the property line of the post office on Miramonte Avenue.

2.5. Existing Education, Encouragement, and Enforcement Programs

Collisions

In such a small geographic area like Los Altos, few statistically valid conclusions can be made about the likelihood and risk of pedestrian collision. In general, though, pedestrian collisions occur in areas where pedestrians walk more and at times when pedestrians are likely to be active. This is generally the case in Los Altos in the last five years.

From 2008-2013, 27 reported collisions occurred in Los Altos, involving 29 pedestrians. Three collisions were fatal. One fatal collision occurred at the intersection of Los Altos Avenue at Hacienda Way. The others occurred on El Camino Avenue at Showers Drive and at San Antonio Road and Loucks Avenue.

Seven collisions involved children under the age of 16; seven other collisions involved adults over the age of 65. Eight of the 25 collisions occurred during morning commute hours, between 8am and 10am. Eight collisions occurred in the afternoon, between the hours of 3pm and 7pm.

Seven collisions were recorded in downtown Los Altos, and two others near downtown, just east of San Antonio Road. The other noticeable cluster of pedestrian collisions occurred along El Camino Real, where four injury and two fatal collisions occurred. Given that these areas experience more pedestrian activity than most other areas of Los Altos, it's not surprising that these areas have experienced slightly more pedestrian collisions. Downtown Los Altos is a walkable environment with ample sidewalks, crosswalks, and pedestrian-scale uses. More intersections, however, mean more conflict points. El Camino Real is less pedestrian-scale, but offers a variety of commercial and retail uses that may be attractive or necessary for pedestrians to access. Crossing El Camino Real, however, forces pedestrians to cross eight lanes of through traffic. Conflict points (intersections) are less concentrated along El Camino Real compared to downtown, but they are more intimidating for pedestrians.

In the last five years, two injury collisions have been reported near Los Altos High School, on Almond Avenue at Gordon Way. Two other notable collisions, one at El Monte Avenue and one at Fremont Avenue, occurred within spans of the two roadways where there is a gap in the pedestrian walkway.

This analysis was produced using data from the California Highway Patrol (CHP) Statewide Integrated Traffic Records System (SWITRS). These data include only collisions reported to the CHP and local police agencies. As such, these totals likely represent an underestimate of the total pedestrian collisions that have occurred Los Altos, particularly those that caused only minor injuries.

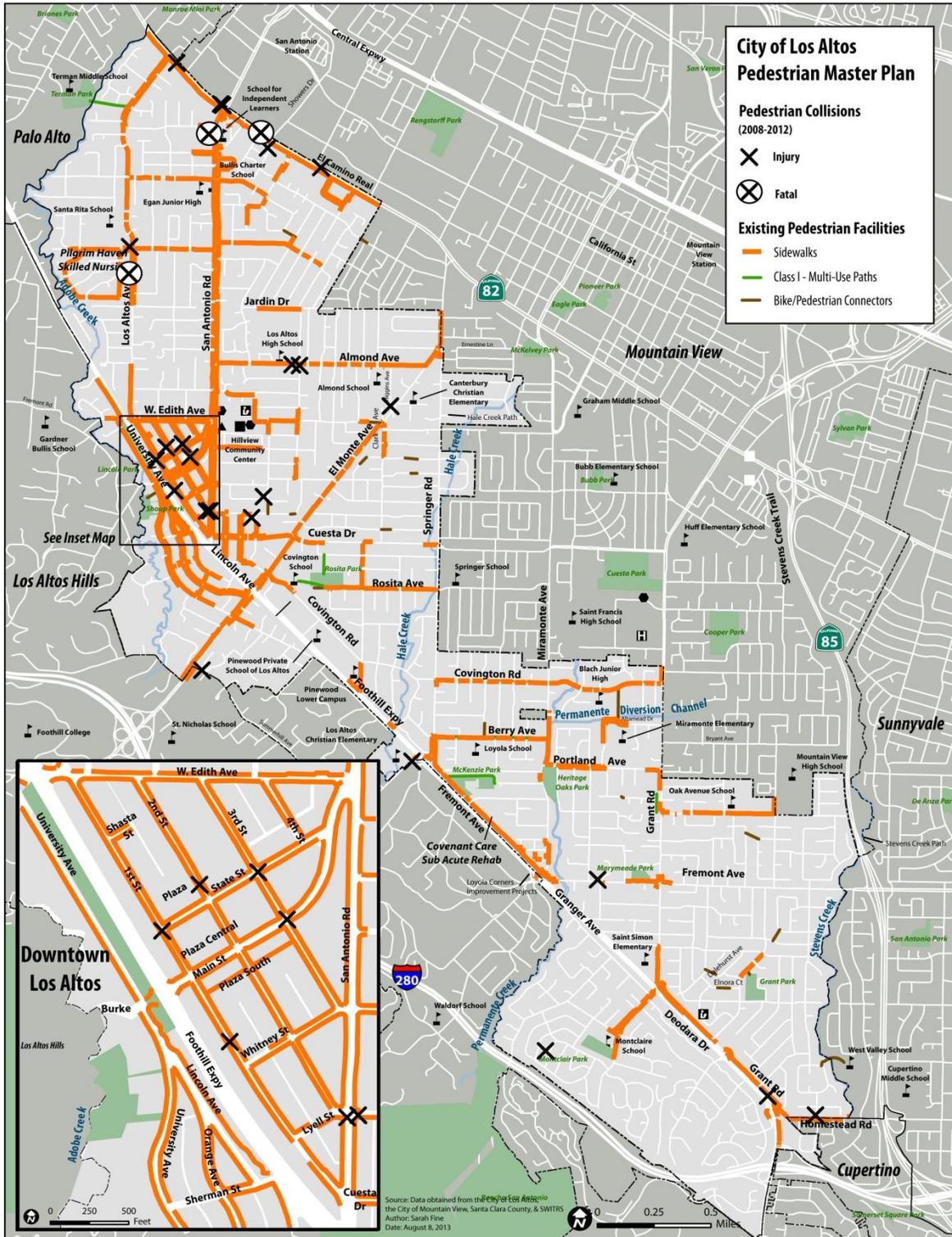


Figure 2-8: Pedestrian Collisions in Los Altos, 2008-2012

Education

Traffic Safe Communities Network (TSCN)

The County of Santa Clara guides a collaborative effort of stakeholders to reduce motor vehicle collisions and increase bicycle and pedestrian safety through the Traffic Safe Communities Network (TSCN). TSCN members include representatives from law enforcement, engineering, public health, education, judicial system and advocacy groups.³

The TSCN Bicycle and Pedestrian Work group promotes walking and biking through education, encouragement and public policy. Previously funded by a Caltrans Safe Routes to School grant, the group worked with schools in Santa Clara County, including Santa Rita Elementary, to encourage walking and biking to school.

Encouragement

Suggested Routes to School Maps

The City of Los Altos provides suggested routes to school maps for 10 schools on the City's website⁴. Suggested routes generally include recommended sidewalks and bikeways, and illustrate traffic control and facilitated crossing locations for school-aged children. The maps help encourage parents to let their child walk or bike to school.

GreenTown Los Altos/Hills

GreenTown Los Altos/Hills is a grassroots initiative of residents and businesses working to make Los Altos and Los Altos Hills more environmentally friendly. GreenTown goals include reducing vehicle miles travelled in Los Altos. More information about GreenTown Los Altos/Hills is found at the website below.

Online resource: <http://greentownlosaltos.org/>

Enforcement

Targeted Enforcement

There are some locations in Los Altos where repeated traffic violations occur and may be resolved with targeted enforcement. The Police Department conducts targeted enforcement at various locations with Class II and III bikeways, which includes heavily traveled areas. The Police Department maintains a data base of publicly identified locations where traffic violations have been observed. At the beginning of each school year, the Police Department targets enforcement around schools.

³ A TSCN program summary brochure is available at:
<http://www.ci.los-altos.ca.us/police/documents/TSCN%20Bicycle%20Brochure.pdf>

⁴ The Routes to School Maps are available at:
http://www.ci.los-altos.ca.us/committees-commissions/bpac/content/suggested_routes.htm

Encroachment into Unimproved Shoulders

In many areas of Los Altos, unimproved shoulders are used as informal pedestrian facilities. Adjacent property owners frequently encroach upon this area with landscaping, hardscaping, fences, or use the area for vehicle parking. Pedestrians are forced into the roadway. In general, unimproved shoulders are not defined as sidewalks in Los Altos, and therefore parking and other encroachment is not a violation.

Overgrown Vegetation

Los Altos Municipal Code 9.20.025 requires property owners to maintain trees, shrubs, plants and flowers in the area fronting and along the side yard of the property between the property line and the back of curb or edge of pavement so that the vegetation does not interfere with public safety or convenient use of streets and sidewalks. Outside the sidewalk zone, property owners must maintain trees so that there is a minimum thirteen-foot vertical clearance from the top of the curb to any part of the tree. Residents may report debris, deteriorated roadway surfaces, faulty traffic signals and overgrown foliage to the Los Altos Maintenance Division.



Many residents park or encroach into the unimproved shoulders in Los Altos, obstructing the pedestrian pathway.



Overgrown vegetation is also a common sidewalk obstruction.

2.6. Summary of Opportunities and Constraints

Opportunities

This analysis has identified two main kinds of opportunities for improved pedestrian walkways in Los Altos. One set are spot opportunities—key gaps in the pedestrian network and key intersections where pedestrian conditions may be considered for recommended improvements. These gaps and intersections are located throughout Los Altos.

Another set of opportunities are corridor opportunities, or lengths of the pedestrian network where sidewalks or other walkways already exist but where conditions, such as the width of the walkway or the type of surface material, may be an opportunity for recommended improvements. Also included in corridor opportunities are “connection opportunities,” or areas with little to no existing pedestrian network but where multi-use paths may be planned in the future.

Constraints

Improvements to the pedestrian network in Los Altos are constrained by several general factors. Most immediately, the pedestrian network is incomplete. Most residential streets don't have walkways, and collector roads have only limited and often incomplete walkways of varying material and condition. As such, there are frequent gaps in the network along major roadways.

Additionally, there are several major roadways—Foothill Expressway and El Camino Real—with limited crossing opportunities and challenges when the opportunities do arise.

Other linear barriers include highways, such as Highway 280, and natural barriers, such as the four creeks that pass through Los Altos. Creating crossings for even channelized or dried creeks is still difficult given the difference in grade and private property abutments that surround the creeks.

Likewise, in order to provide walkways along any roadway, there are many situations in which property owners have encroached upon public right of way. In order to provide walkways, the city will have to enforce the public easement to provide walkways that are in character with existing neighborhoods.

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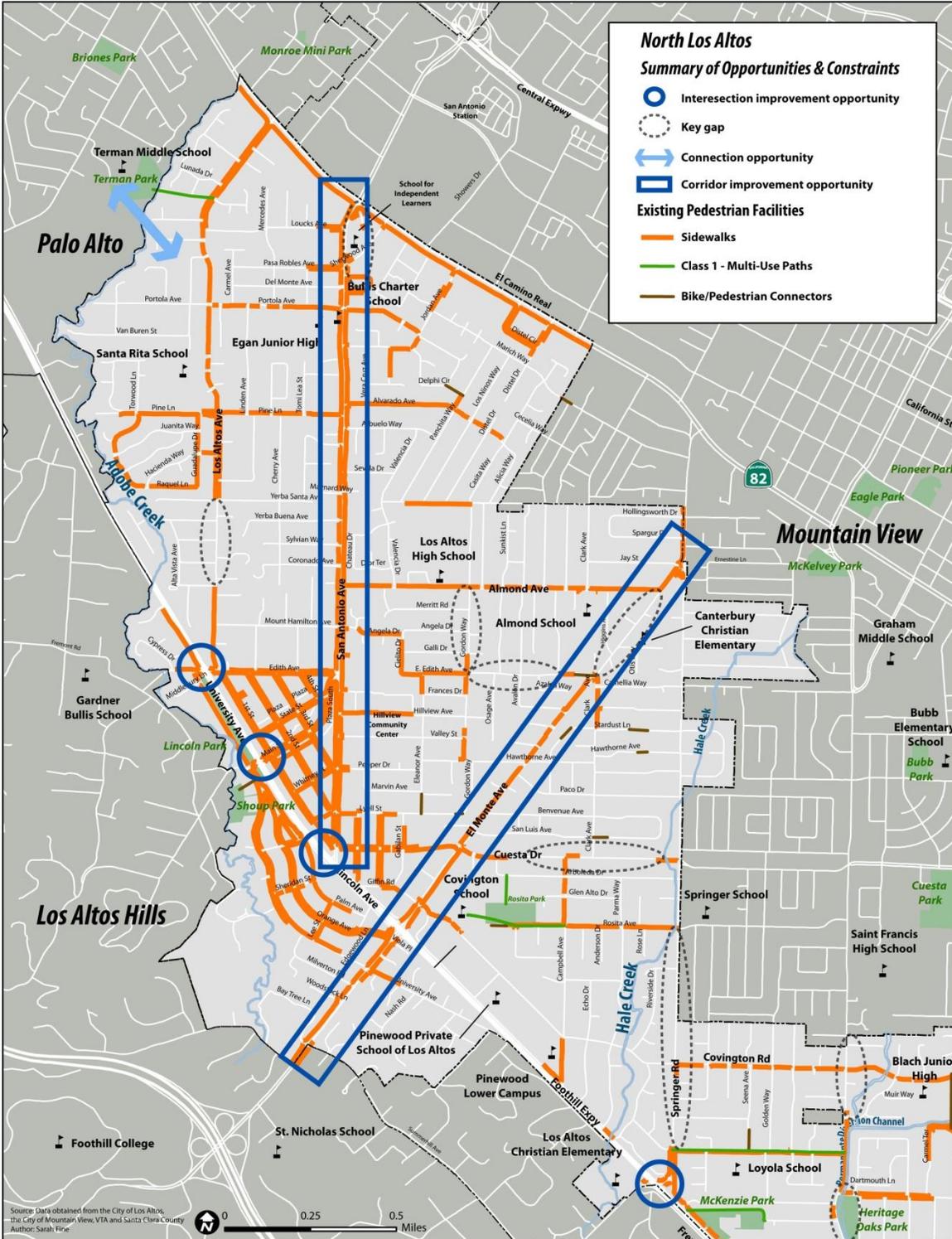


Figure 2-9: North Los Altos Opportunities and Constraints

North Los Altos

Opportunities

- Major corridor improvement opportunities along San Antonio Avenue and El Monte Avenue. While San Antonio Avenue does have pedestrian walkways on either side of the street, in many areas the pathways are too narrow. El Monte Avenue is another major corridor of Los Altos that only has pedestrian facilities on just one side of the roadway.
- Key gaps include stretches of major corridors without pedestrian facilities, such as Los Altos Avenue between Yerba Santa Ave and Mariposa Avenue, San Antonio Avenue at Sherwood Gateway, and El Monte Avenue between Edith Avenue and Almond Avenue.
- Edith Avenue is a residential street that provides a significant east-west walkway, but a significant gap exists between El Monte Avenue and Gordon Way. East of Gordon Way are civic buildings and connections to downtown Los Altos.

Constraints

- An incomplete network of pedestrian walkways is a major constraint in North Los Altos. Most residential streets don't have walkways, and collector roads have limited, incomplete sidewalks.
- El Camino Real is a commercial thoroughfare with many parking lots entrances and exits that create additional conflict points.
- Coordination between jurisdictions is another source of potential constraint to improvements on multi-jurisdictional roadways, such as El Camino Real (maintained by the California Department of Transportation) and Foothill Expressway (maintained by Santa Clara County).

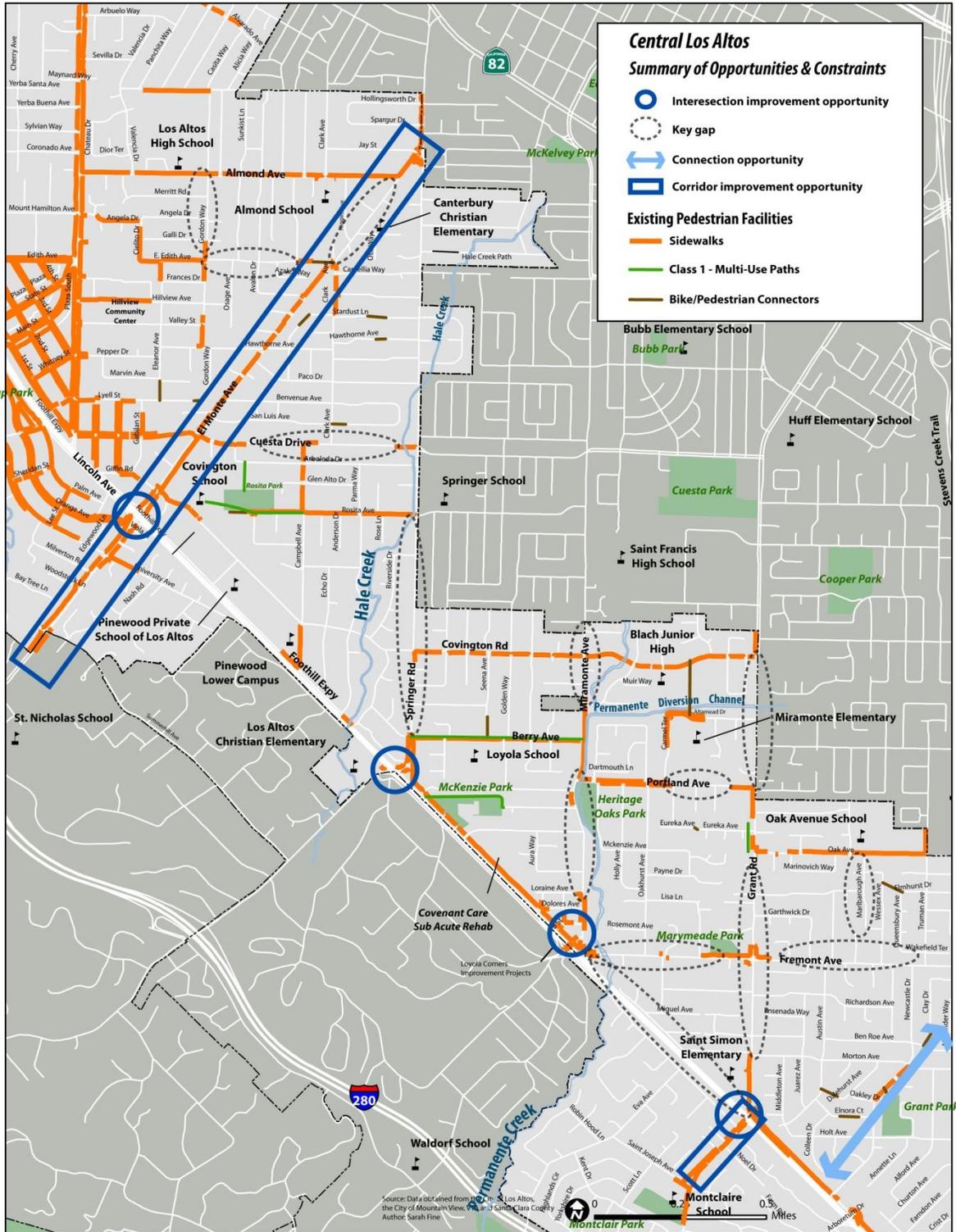


Figure 2-10: Central Los Altos Opportunities and Constraints

Central Los Altos

Opportunities

- Major corridor improvements outlined previously in the North Los Altos opportunities and constraints, such as El Monte Avenue, also impact Central Los Altos.
- Central Los Altos is home to two of the first Los Altos multi-use paths on Berry Avenue and Rosita Avenue. The success of these walkways may make nearby property owners more amenable to the construction of additional paths in the area. Areas identified as key gaps, where such paths might be recommended, include stretches of both residential and collector roads such as Miramonte Avenue, Portland Avenue, and Altamead Drive.
- Gordon Way, an access route to Almond School and Los Altos High School, was also identified as a key gap.
- Key opportunity intersections in Central Los Altos are located along Foothill Expressway. In most cases, there is an existing pedestrian network to improve upon.

Constraints

- Foothill Expressway is a challenging crossing for residents of Central Los Altos, but the collector road's importance as a regional automobile route and the inter-jurisdictional coordination required for any improvements create potential constraints.
- Creating dedicated pedestrian walkways along some roads, such as Grant Road, may lead to potential conflicts between bicyclists and pedestrians.

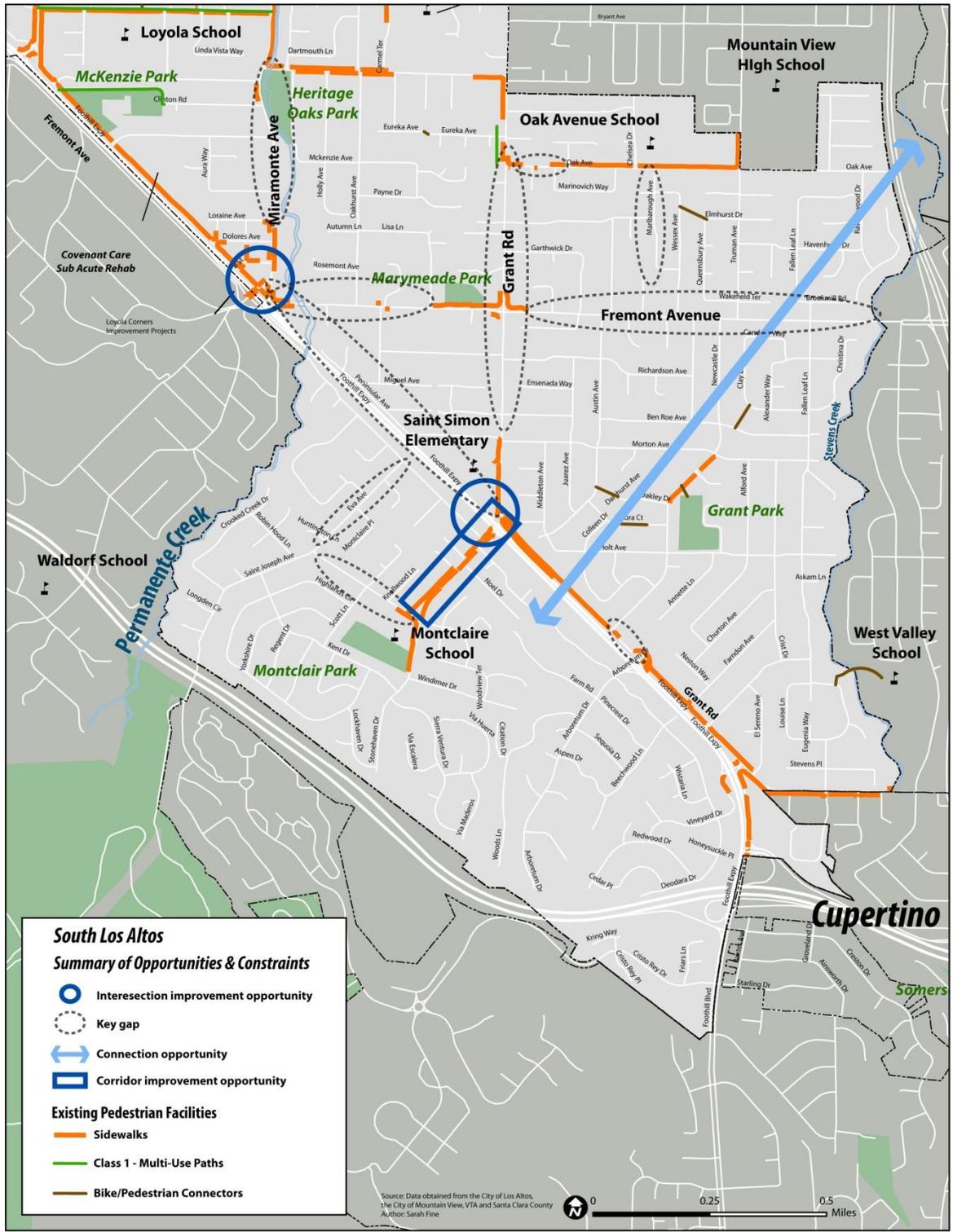


Figure 2-11: South Los Altos Opportunities and Constraints

South Los Altos

Opportunities

- Currently undergoing a feasibility study process, the Stevens Creek Trail is slated to extend through South Los Altos. Trail alignment proposals traverse through this neighborhood on neighborhood streets.
- Key intersection opportunities include the main Loyola Corners intersection at Fremont Avenue, Miramonte Avenue, and Foothill Expressway.
- The narrow and inconsistent sidewalk on St. Joseph Avenue may present an opportunity for walkway improvements on a school corridor.
- Key gaps include school access routes such as Eva Ave and St. Joseph Avenue near Montclair School, and Marlborough Avenue, providing access to Oak Avenue School. Key gaps along Miramonte Avenue, Grant Road, and Fremont Avenue are also opportunity sites for pedestrian improvements.
- Grant Road provides access parallel to Foothill Expressway.
- A new multi-use path currently in construction on Homestead Road, and a new signal at the Foothill Crossings shopping center will provide improved access to retail along Homestead Road.

Constraints

- As with most neighborhoods of Los Altos, there is an incomplete pedestrian walkway network in South Los Altos.
- Foothill Expressway presents constraints to South Los Altos as well. Inter-agency coordination to resolve the difficult pedestrian crossings will be a challenge.